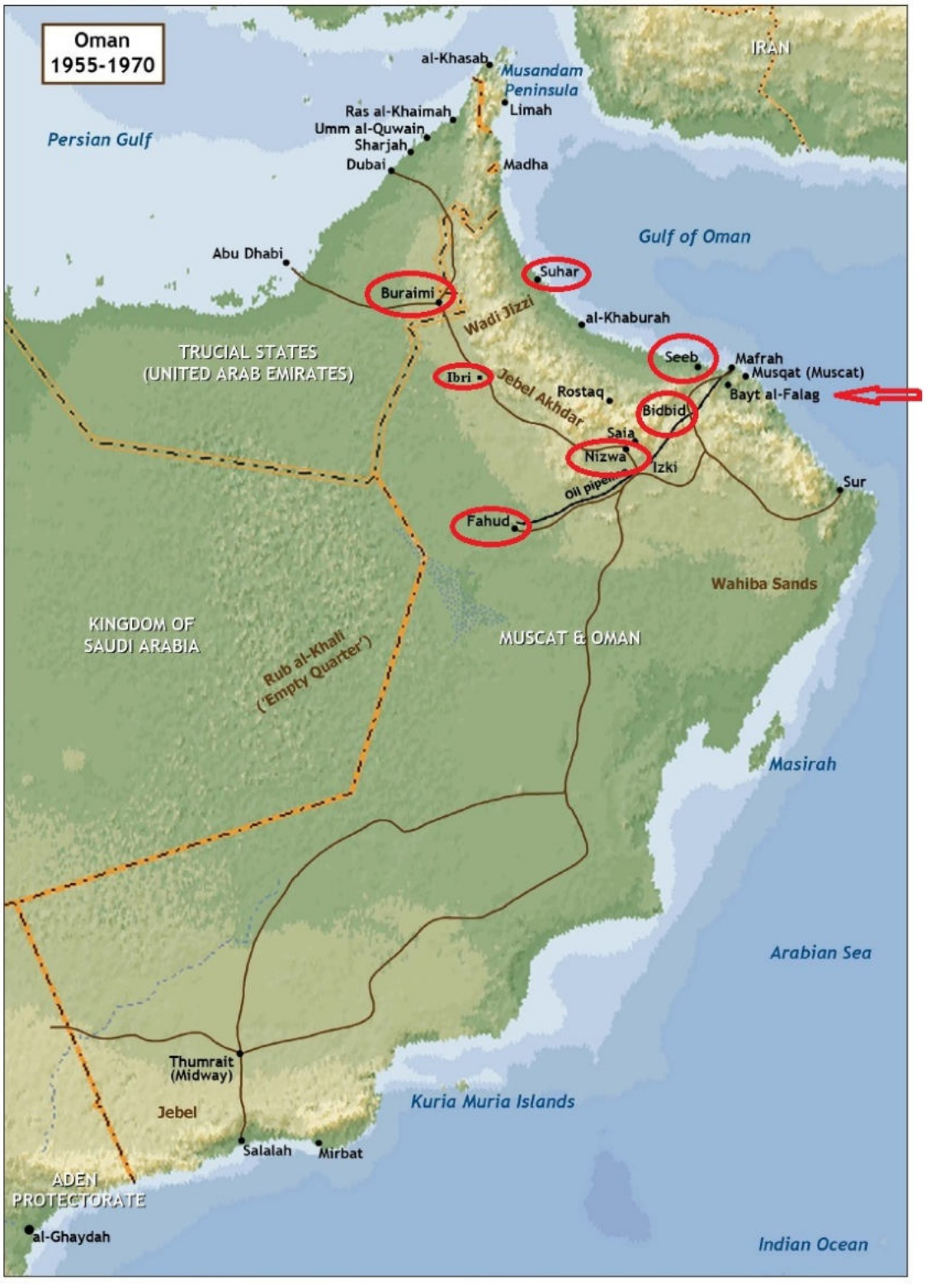
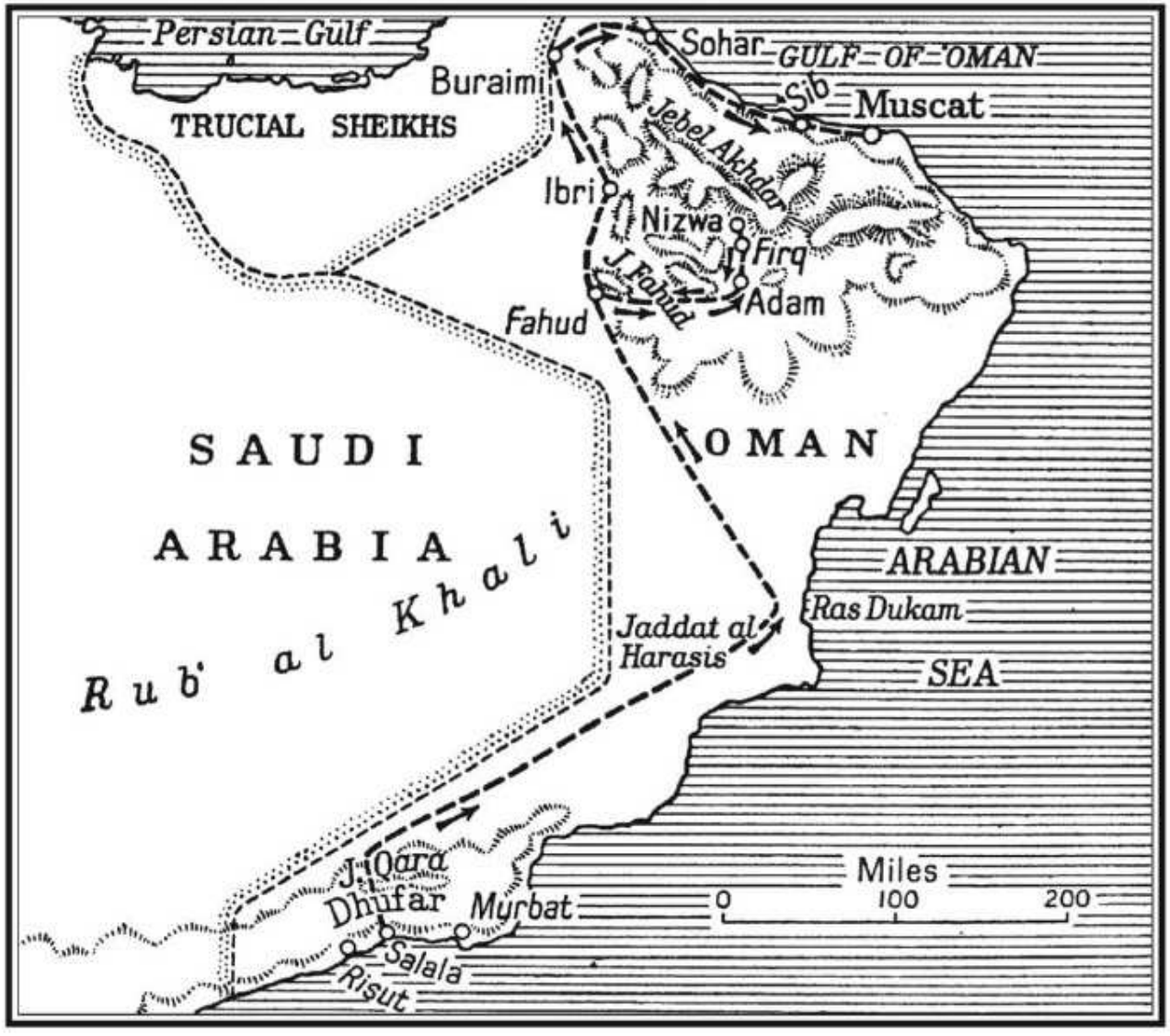
Traveller's Photographic Record of a Trip around Northern Oman, 1967.

How did such a trip come about? Well, I was stationed in Aden as a lieutenant with my regiment the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers when I was asked to go to Muscat to assist in the training of recruits at the Sutltan's Armed Forces Training Centre at Ghallah, about 30 kilometres or so from the walled city of Muscat. I arrived in January, 1967 to find that the Eid holiday was about to begin and the place was closing down for a week. It was decided that we should take 2 land rovers and undertake a tour of Northern Oman. I could not believe my luck. Before Quaboos became sultan in 1970, Oman remained a medieval backwater; no roads, no infrastructure, no hospitals, no tourists, the only foreigners were a few of the military and personnel from the oil company. Thus my amateur photographs of that time reflect an Oman that no longer exists.



Map from "The War in Northern Oman: Muscat and the Sultanate of Oman, 1954-1962 by Peter Shergold"

From page 11 of "Sultan in Oman" by Jan Morris, Faber and Faber, 1957; the Sultan's route exactly matching our own from Niswa to Fahud to Ibri to Buraimi to Sohar via the fabulous Wadi Jizzi to Sib and thus to Muscat, or actually in our case returning to the Sultan's Armed Forces Training Centre at Ghallah which was our starting point.



Muscat and Oman in 1955, showing the Sultan's route

Starting point : Sultan's Armed Forces Training Centre, Ghallah, some 25 kilometres from the Headquarters at Bait al Falaj, now re-purposed as the Sultan's Armed Forces Museum.

23.539281698022055, 58.3787203128852

Then about 45 kms. to Bib Bid : 23.40452689170456, 58.118720251119015

Then about 115 kms. to Nizwa via the Wadi Samail : 22.93129371262425, 57.532463534338675

Then about 160 kms. to Fahud : 22.32460430667605, 56.493943120110956

Then about 130 kms. to Ibri : 23.233038292123357, 56.508299557022376

Then about 160 kms. to Buraimi also known as Al Ain ; 24.216166963101546, 55.75270586779289

Then about 125 kms. to Sohar via the Wadi Jizzi : 24.362261908044452, 56.74952823073048

Then about 185 kms. to Sib : 23.684439128835997, 58.18235599169023

Before a final 35 kms. or so returning to our starting point.

A total of about 1,000 kms,

Graham Millar at Nizwa; the only clue to my identity might be the gosling green and magenta stable belt of the Northumberland Fusiliers.

Stopping to give a lift to a local between Bid Bid and Nizwa.

Our terrific driver, Hussein.

The wadi at Bid Bid from the Desert Regiment compound.

Wadi Samail on the road from Bib Bid to Nizwa.

Arabian Oryx in the Desert Regiment camp at Bid Bid.

Omani Spiny-Tailed Lizard (Uromastyx thomasi) at Bid Bid.

Wadi Samail.

Wadi Samail

Wadi Samail.

Wadi Samail on the road from Bid Bid to Nizwa.

Part of Nizwa.

The centre of Nizwa.

The fort at Nizwa.

Nizwa.

Family at Nizwa.

The Big Tree at Nizwa; a meeting place.

Nizwa.

Nizwa.

Nizwa.

Nizwa.

Nizwa.

Nizwa.

A fort near Nizwa.

On the road near Nizwa.

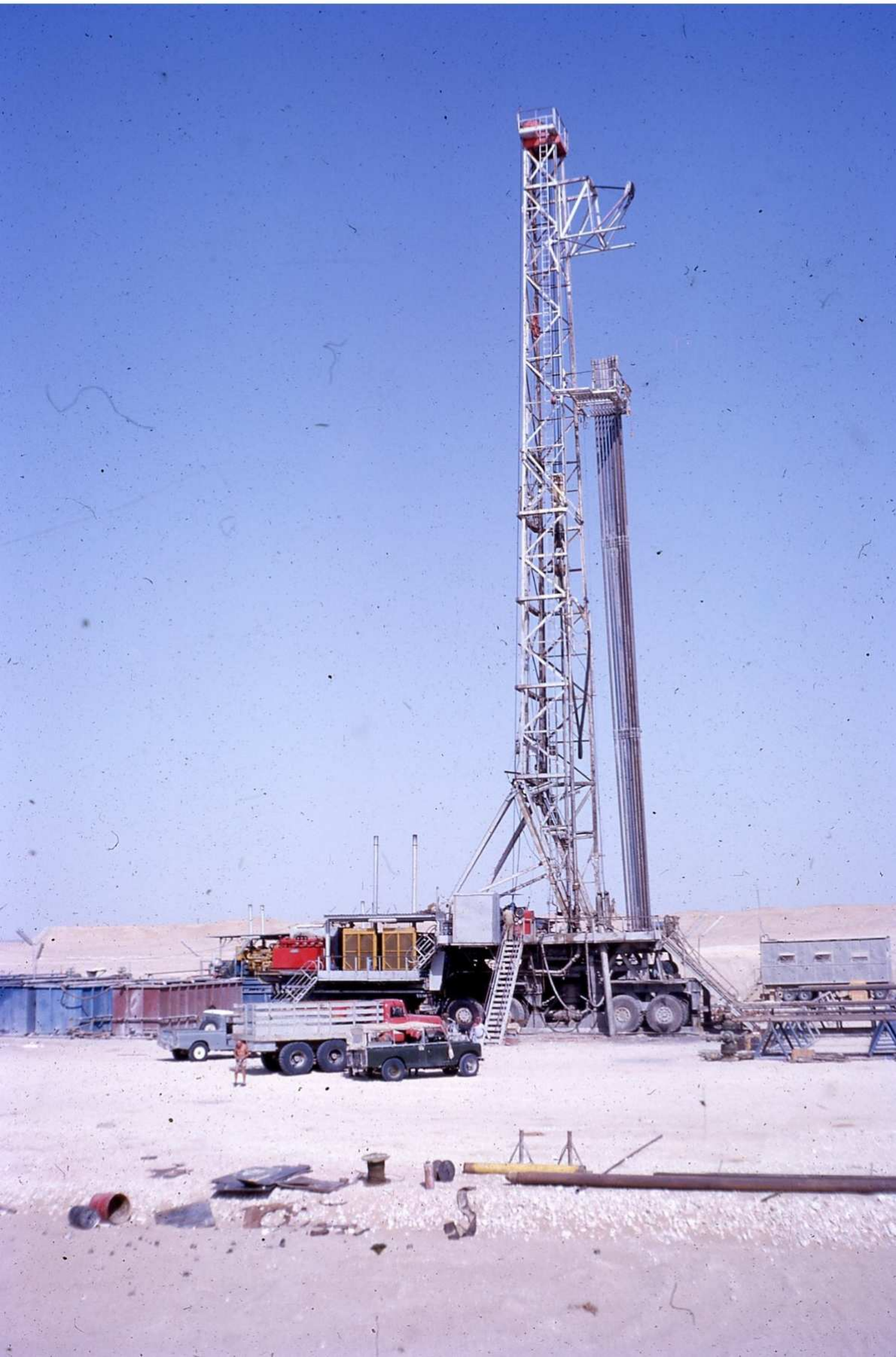
Tyre replacement on the road near Nizwa.

The flat tyre.

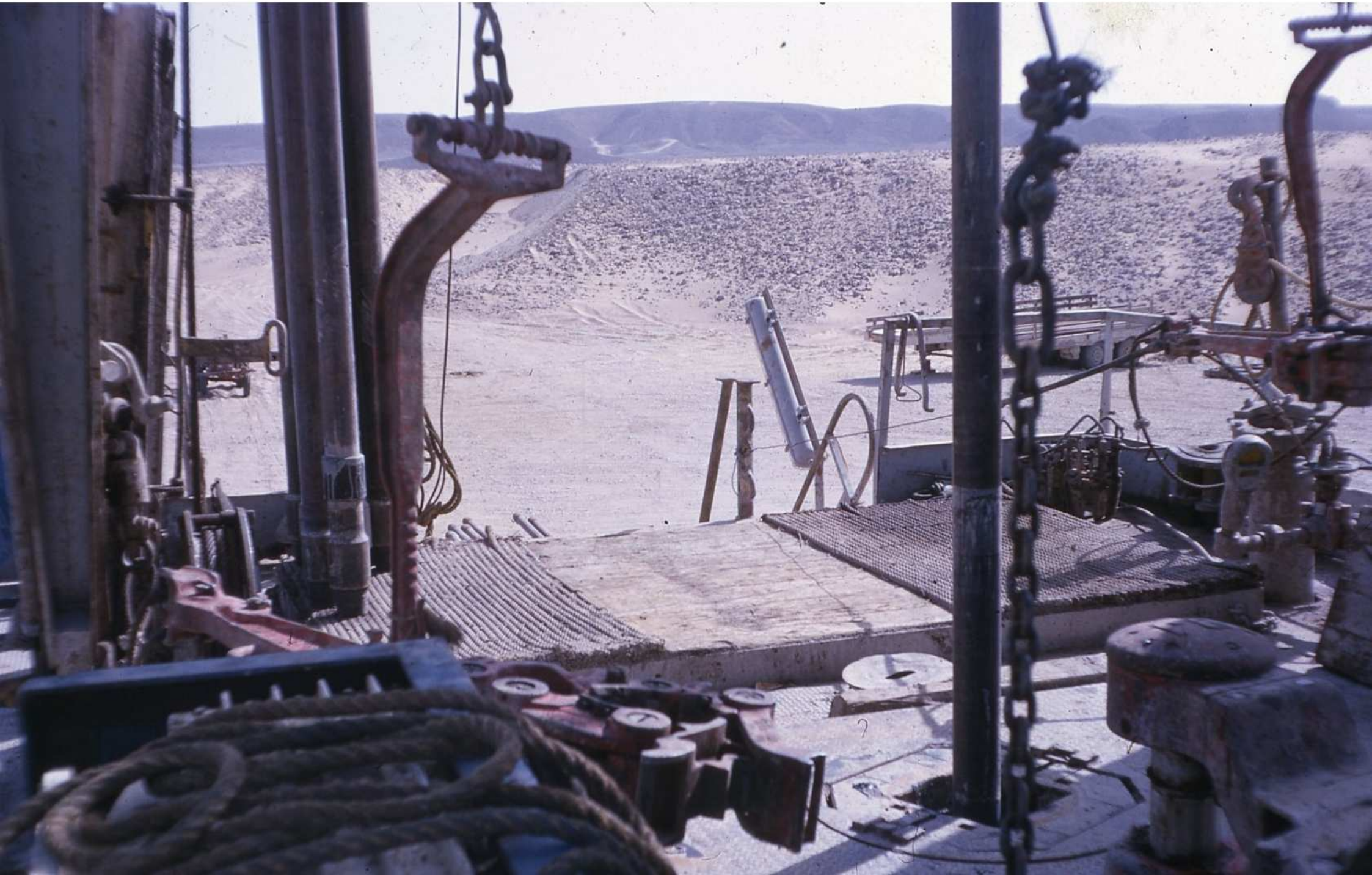
Tribesman near Ibri.

Drill equipment at Fahud.

Drilling for oil in Fahud.



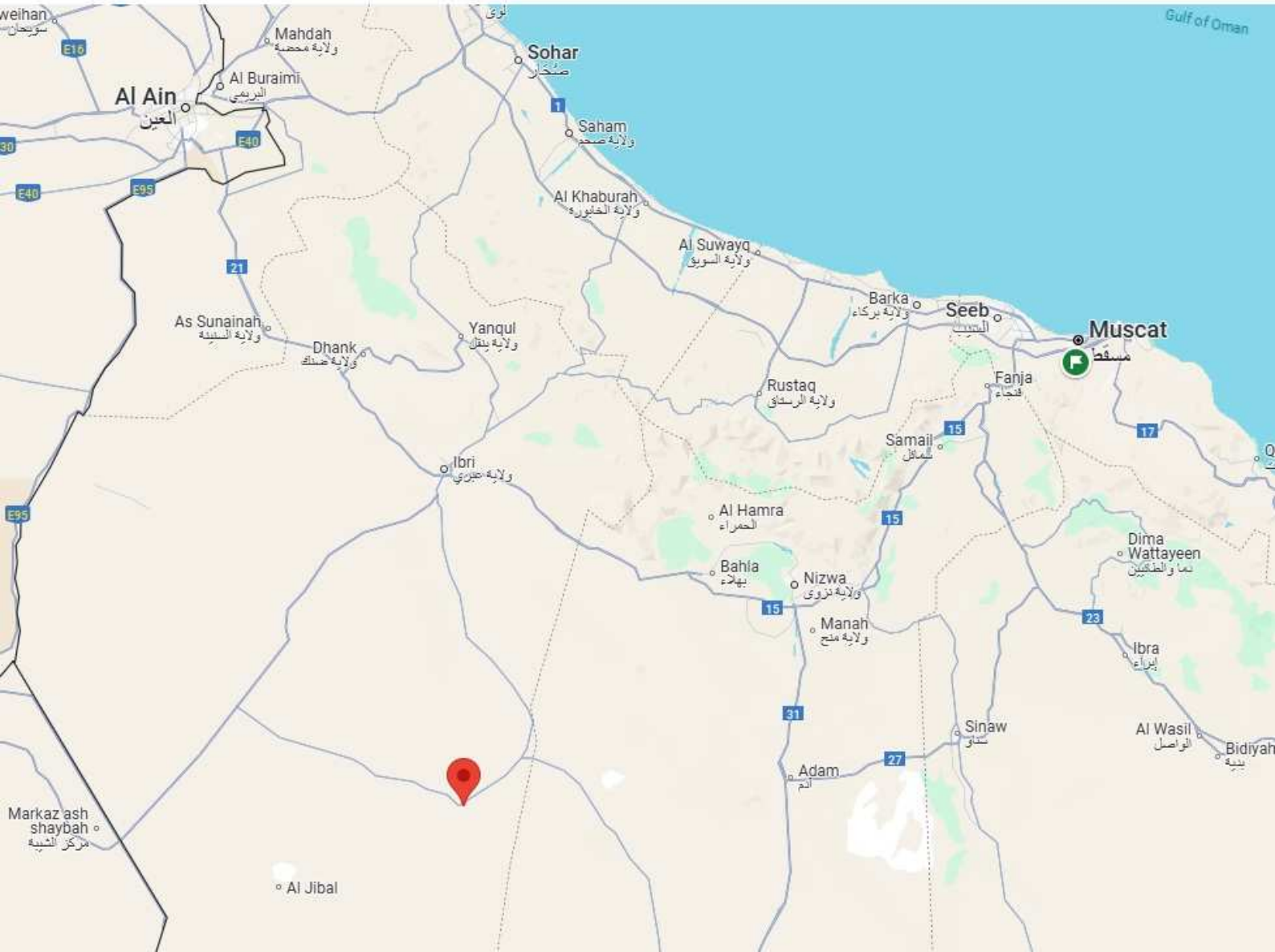
The country around Fahud.



“Fahud is a permanent oil camp and oil field in the middle of the central plain area of Oman, named after the nearby Jebel Fahud believed to mean "Leopard Mountain" from the time when wild leopards roamed the area. The main oil camp is owned by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), the national oil company.

Oil operations commenced in 1954 when a PDO survey party arrived at the jebel and began surveying it. The first well at Jebel Fahud was completed at 12,235 feet in May 1957. Unfortunately, it was a dry hole except for a very small quantity of gas and oil. Three of the PDO partners decided to withdraw from the Omani concession, leaving Shell (85%) and Partex (15%) to take it over and resume exploration. Only a few hundred yards from the original test well site, a second test well was sunk at Fahud and, in 1964, found oil in commercial quantities.

Today, Fahud is the central base of PDO's operations in the interior of Oman; the company's main offices are in Mina Al Fahal in Muscat. Many contracting companies also have camps for their workers and equipment at Fahud. The town is served by Fahud Airport.” Sourced from Wikipedia.



Tea break on the road to Ibri.

Approaching Ibri.

Entering Ibri.

Water in Ibri.

Water collection at Ibri.

Water collection at Ibri.

Water collection at Ibri.

Street at Ibri, all the houses having inwards facing courtyards.

Fort Jehili at Buraimi Oasis in 1967; home to A Squadron of the Trucial Oman Scouts.

Fort Jehili at Buraimi Oasis in 1967

Portrait at Fort Jahili, the Trucial Oman Scouts fort at Buraimi.

Customs Post on the road between Buraimi and Sohar
manned by a soldier of the Oman Gendarmerie.

Customs Post on the Buraimi to Sohar road.

On the road from Buraimi to Sohar.

A part of the Customs Post on the Wadi Jizzi road.

The upper reaches of the Wadi Jizzi, closer to Buraimi than to Sohar.

This might be the most interesting photograph in this collection; it is of an inverted syphon carrying water from one side of Wadi Jizzi to the other. Note how similar my photograph is to that of the image and diagram from "Historic Mosques and Shrines of Oman".

From page 16 of Historic Mosques and Shrines of Oman. Paolo M. Costa with a contribution by E. Baldissera, BAR International Series 938, 2001.

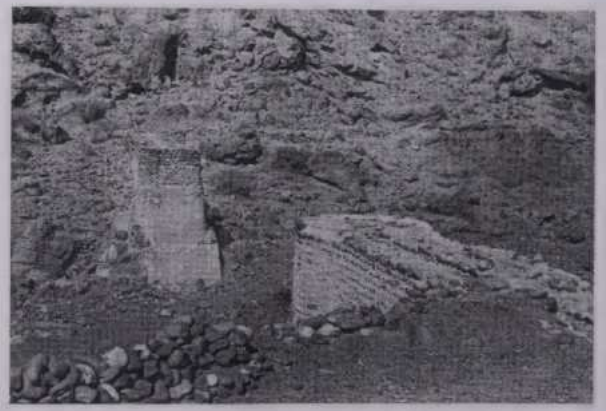


Fig. 12. Falaj crossing a wadi by means of an inverted syphon, al-Mulayyina (Wadi al-Jizzi)

HISTORIC MOSQUES AND SHRINES OF OMAN

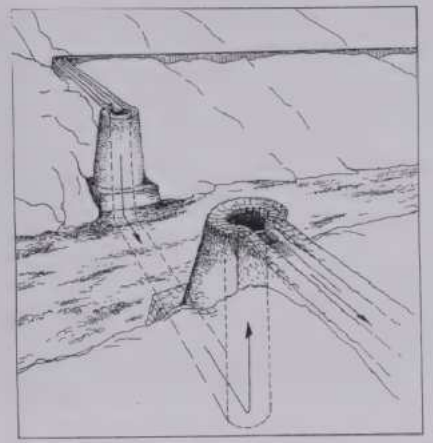


Fig. 13. Diagram of an inverted syphon (based on al-Mulayyina, see fig. 12) (P.M. Costa, 1983b).

En route in the Wadi Jizzi.

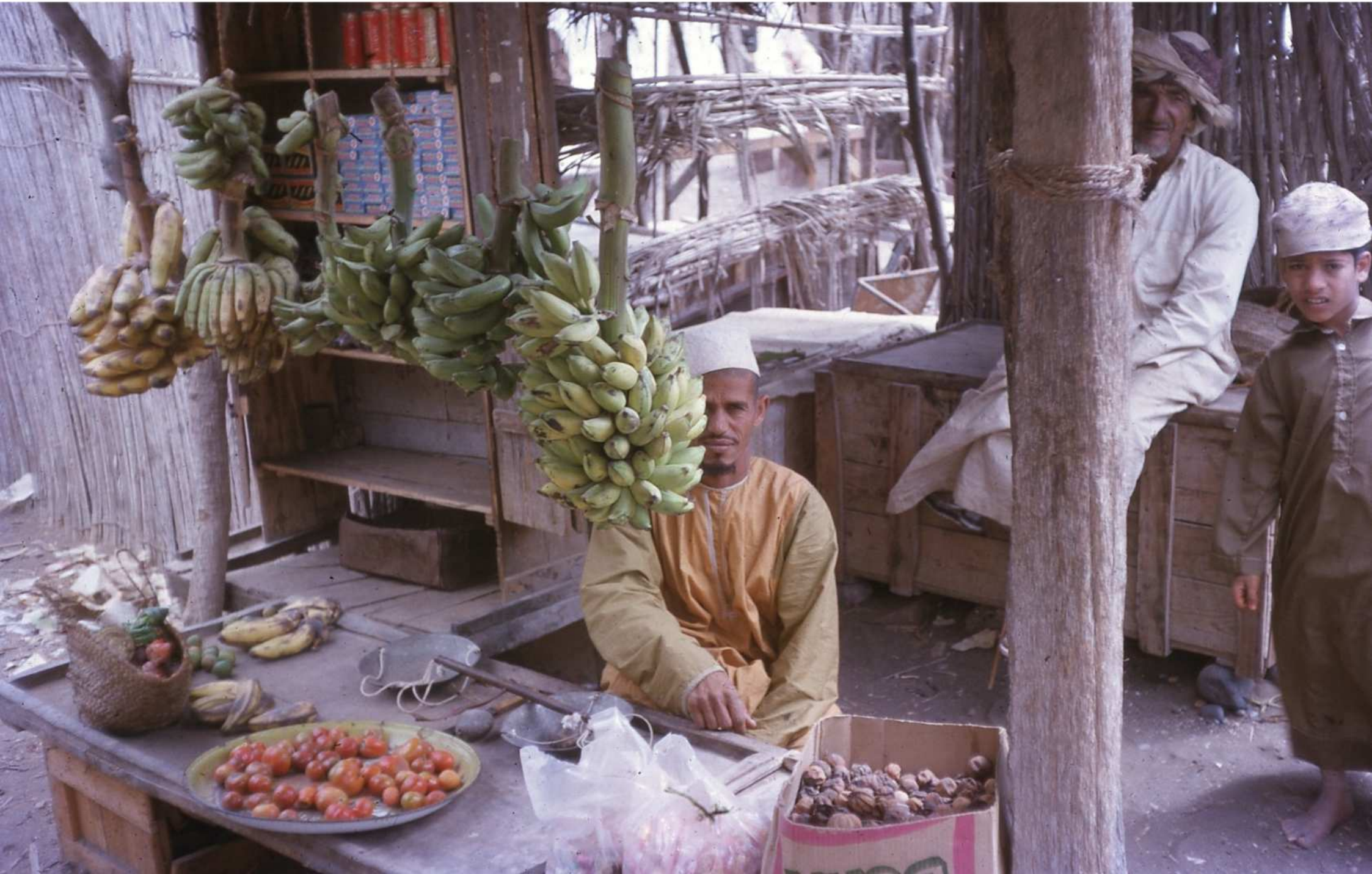
A stop in the Wadi Jizzi.

Sandstorm as we approached Sohar.

Sohar.

Camel awaiting its owner at an Eid celebration.

Sohar fruit market.



Sohar fort with the Sultan's flag.

Military establishment at Sohar.

Camel parking at Sohar during the Eid celebrations.

Ghee seller at Sohar.

The ghee seller and his shop.

The wonderful bodyguard Ali with his bandolier and No.4 rifle.

He looks supercilious because he knows the 100 th. name of God.

We came across this magnificent group of Omanis on the road between Sohar and Sib.

Date palms, Sohar.

Many donkeys acted as beasts of burden in Oman
but this poor animal is shackled and looks much the worse from wear.

My attempt to capture the serenity of part of the oasis of Ibri.

Dust rising from the unsealed road between Bid Bid and Nizwa caused by the oncoming Petroleum Development Company vehicle. In 1967 the only sealed road was between Muscat and Mattrah, a distance of perhaps 2.5 kilometres.

From page 11 of Oman's Geological Heritage, Second Edition, 2006.

Map from page viii of "The War in Northern Oman: Muscat and the Sultanate of Oman, 1954-1962" by Peter Shergold, 2021.

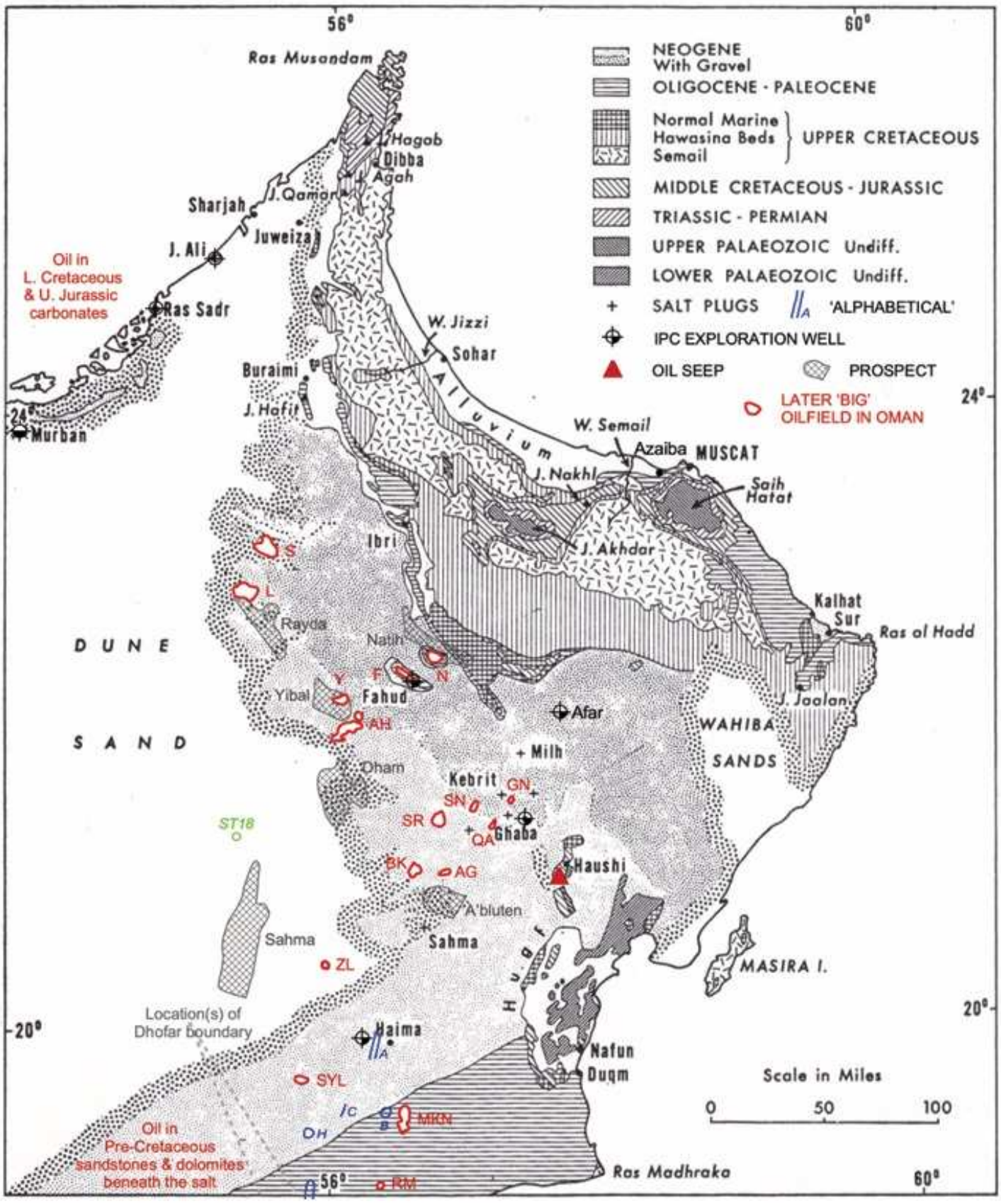


Fig. 8) Geological map of Oman from Morton (1959) with addition of the 'alphabeticals', the Haushi oil seep, Afar - 1, geophysical prospects, *ST18* and the major oilfields discovered in Oman in the next two decades by PDO and Occidental. The Haima location marked by Morton is interestingly Haima East, rather than Haima West which was drilled.
AG = Al Ghubar, AH = Al Huwaisah, BK = Barik, F = Fahud, L = Lekhwair, MKN = Mukhaizna, N = Natih, QA = Qarn Alam, RM = Rima, S = Safah, SN = Saih Nihayda, SR = Saih Rawl, SYL = Sayyala, Y = Yibal and ZL = Zauliyah.

Geological map from page 32 of "The Legacy of the Iraq Petroleum Company in Oman" by Alan P. Heward, 2021 Geological Society of Oman.

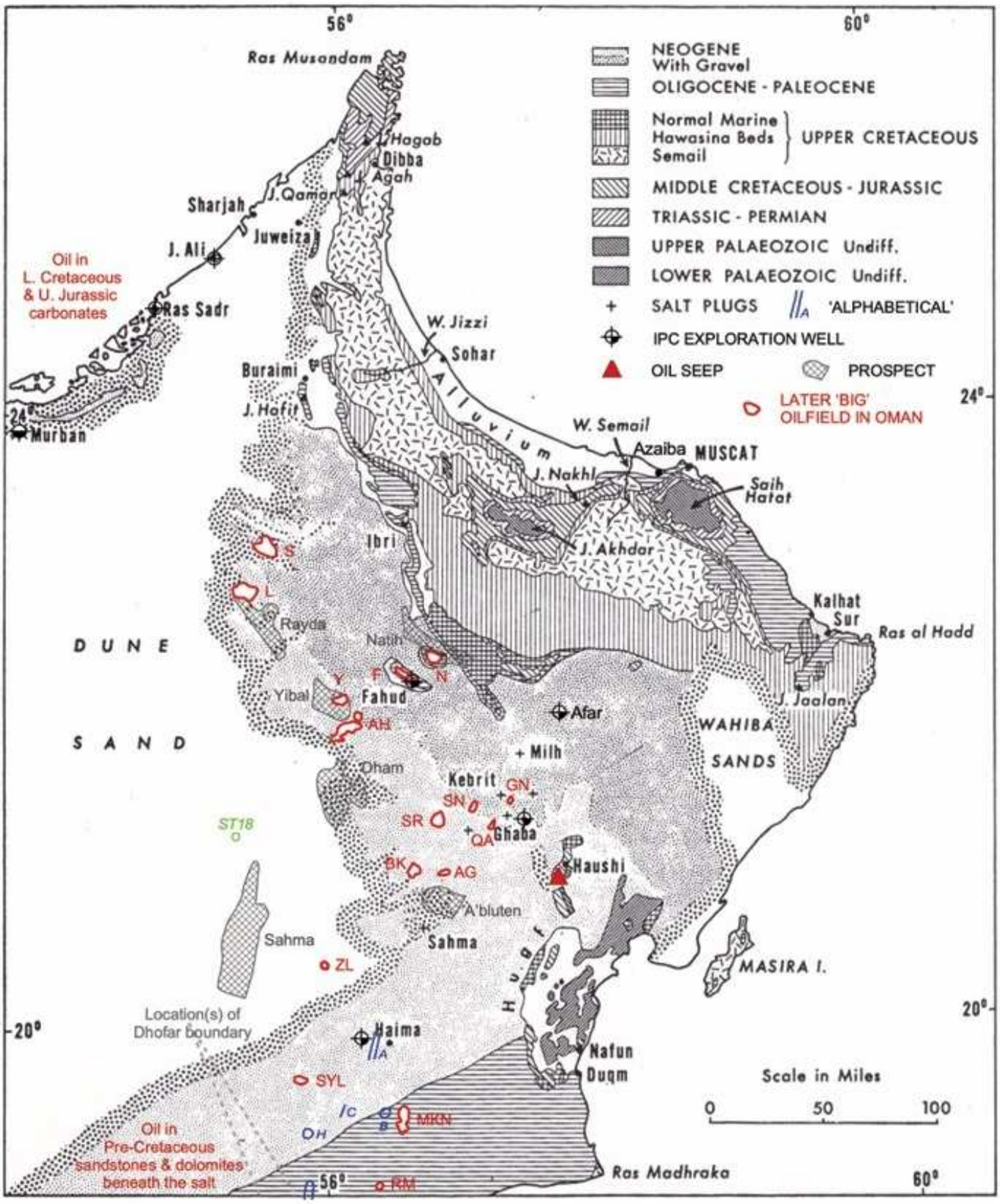


Fig. 8) Geological map of Oman from Morton (1959) with addition of the 'alphabeticals', the Haushi oil seep, Afar - 1, geophysical prospects, *ST18* and the major oilfields discovered in Oman in the next two decades by PDO and Occidental. The Haima location marked by Morton is interestingly Haima East, rather than Haima West which was drilled.

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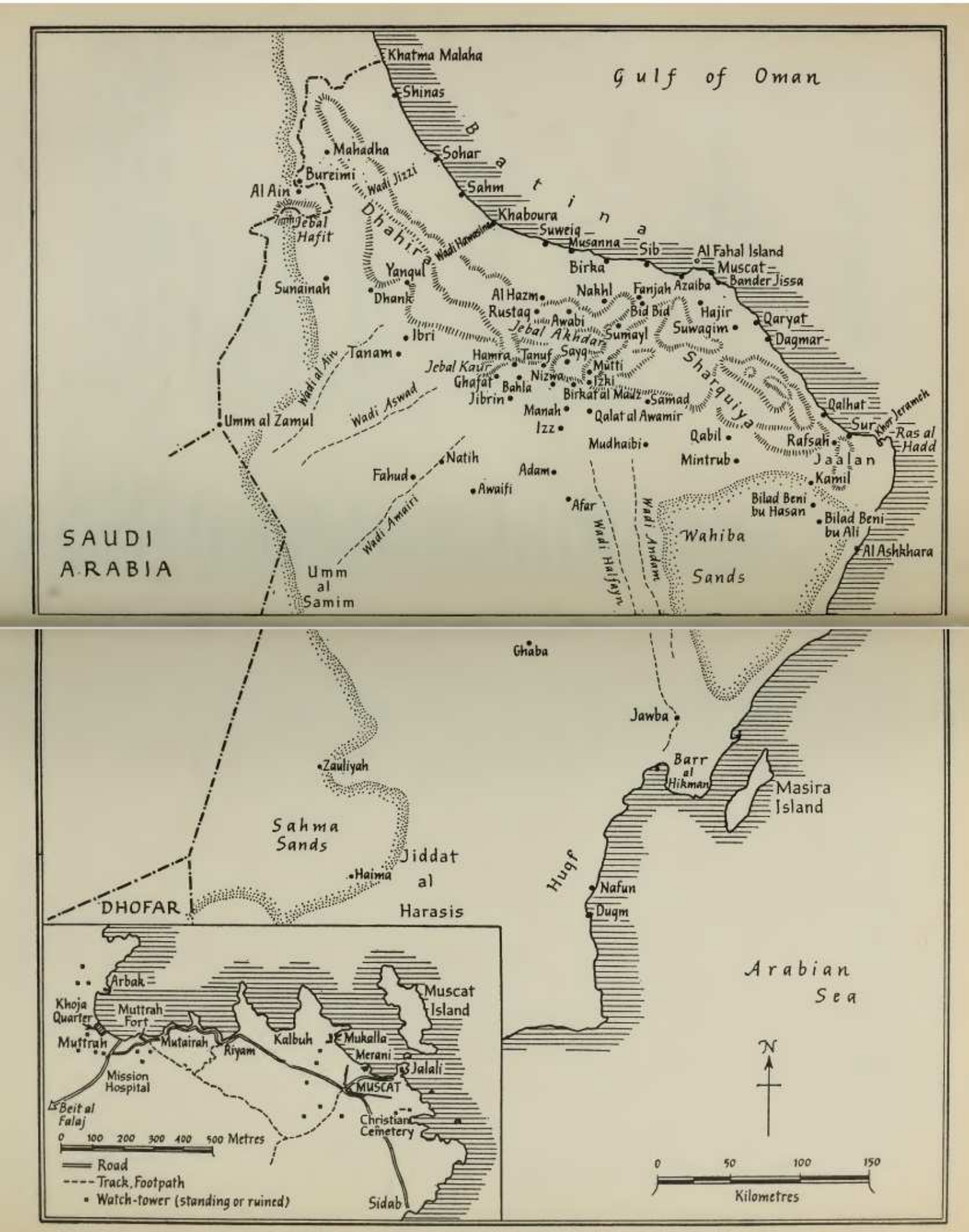
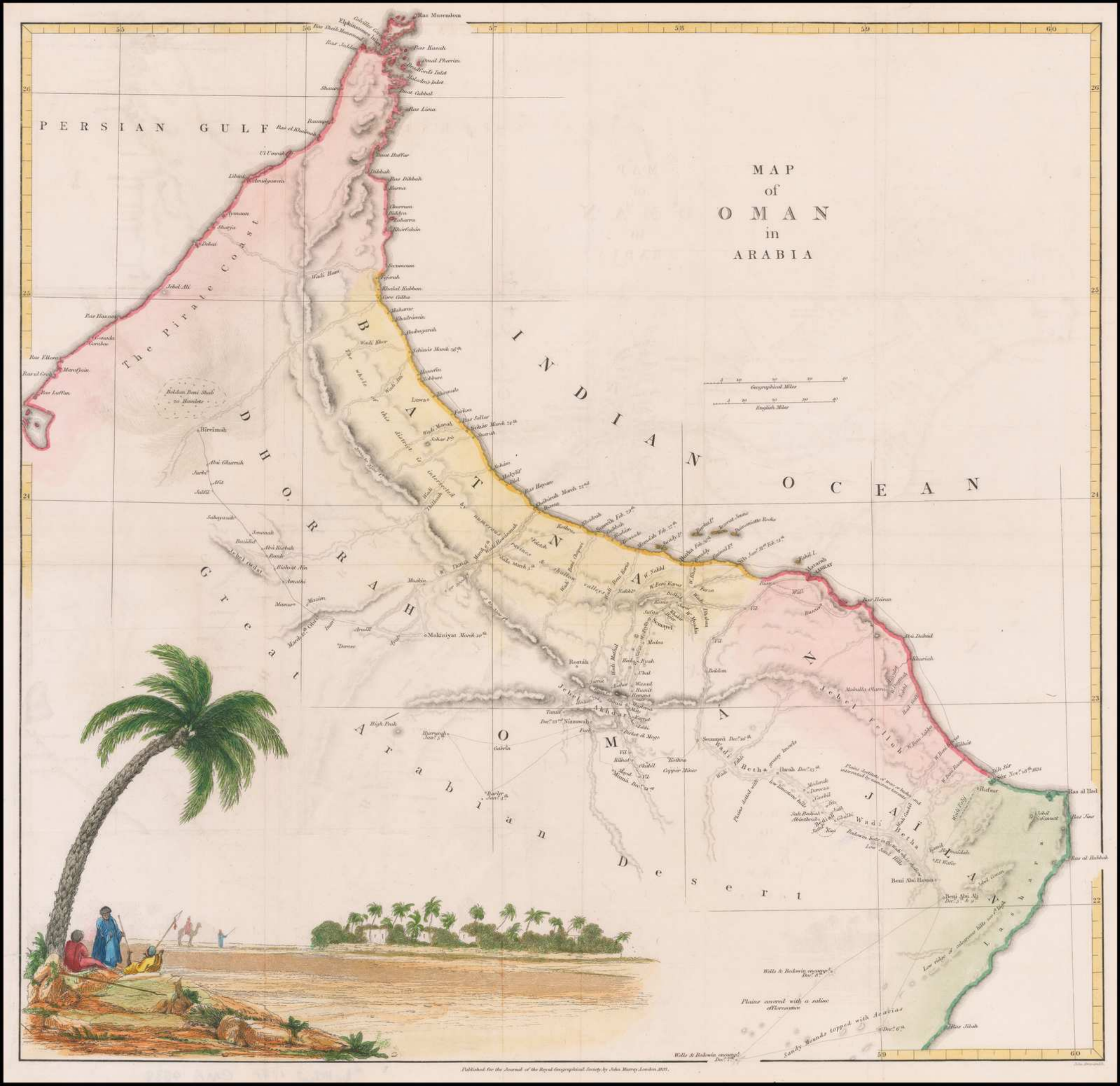
Map entitled "Muscat and Oman" from page 19 in "Oman before 1970 : the end of an era" by Ian Skeet, Faber and Faber, 1974.



Muscat and Oman

Map of Oman from page x of History of Modern Oman by Jeremy Jones and Nicholas Ridout, Cambridge, 2015.

MAP 1. Oman.



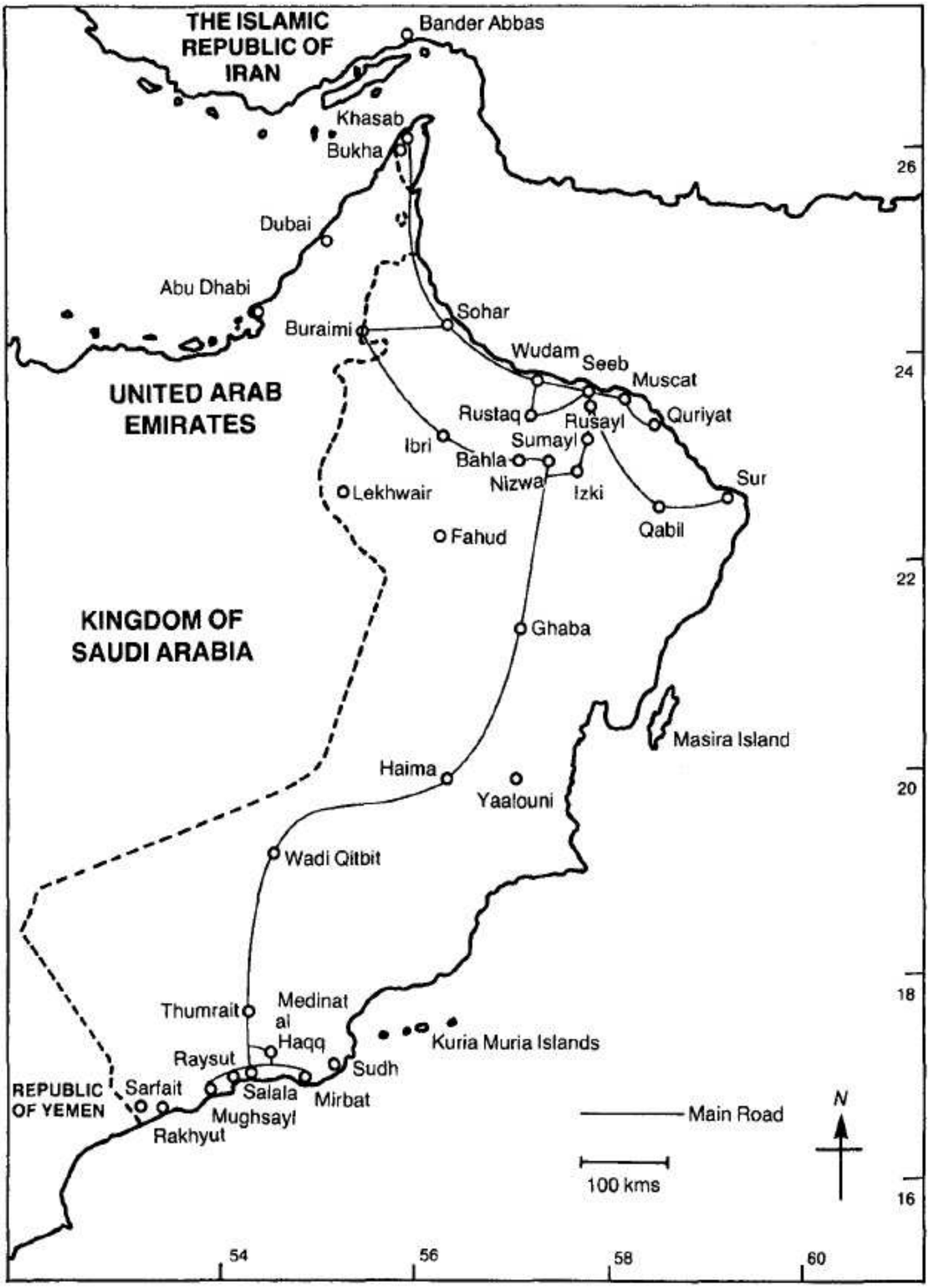
Published for the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society by John Murray, London, 1837.

Oman. Cartography by Bookcomp, Inc.

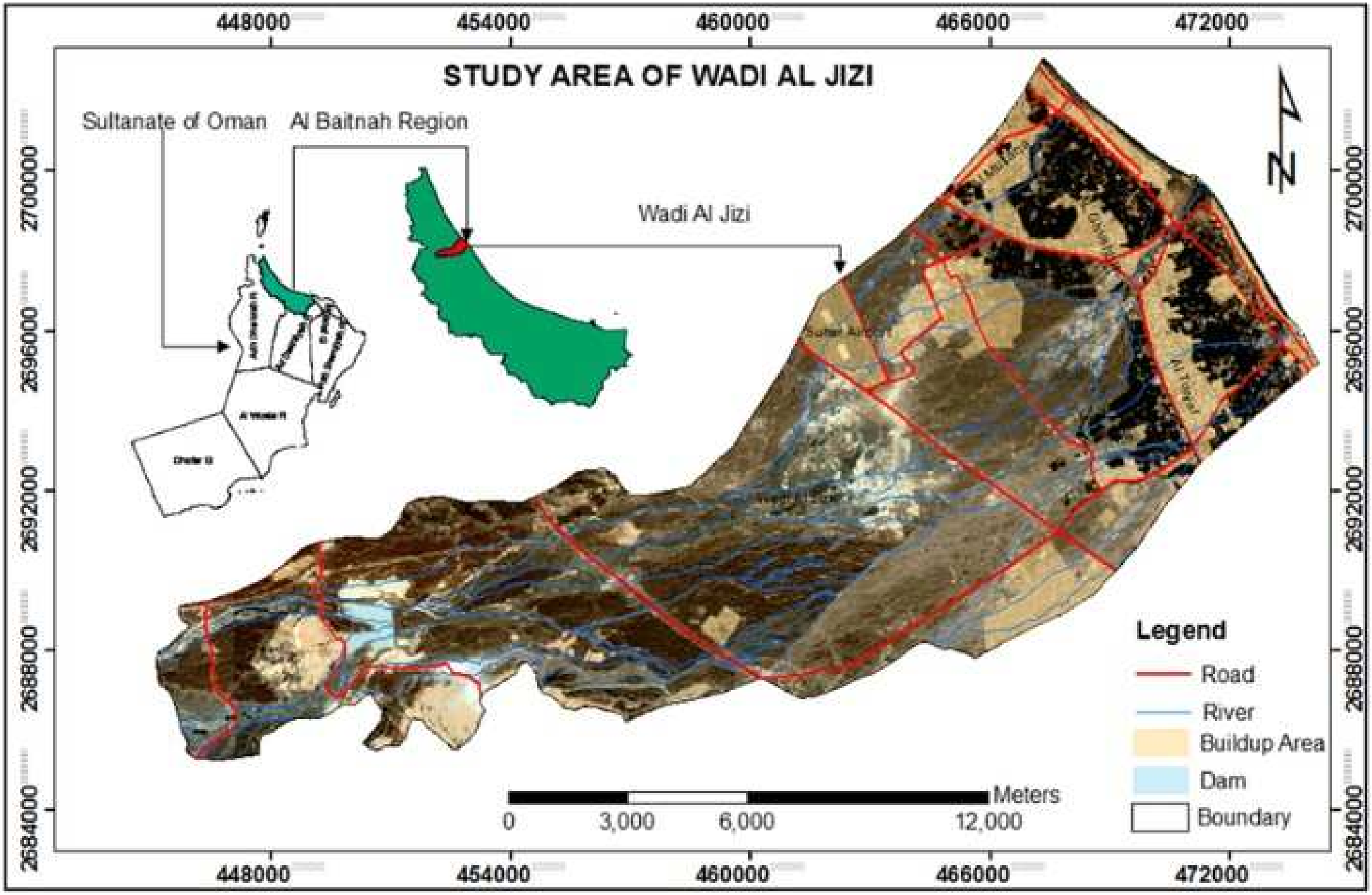
Extracted from :
Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Arab States today: an encyclopedia of life in the Arab States, 2009.

SEA OF OMAN
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
Liwa
Suhār Port
Suhār
Suhār Airport
Mahadah
Al Buraymī
Saham
Jabal Qiṭār
Wādī Al Jizī
Al Khābūrah
As Suwayq
Al Musan'ah
Juzur Ad Dīmāniyyāt
Muscat International Airport
As Sulṭān Qāboos Port
Maṭrah
MUSCAT(MASQAṮ)
Barkā'
As Sīb
Bawshar
Al 'Āmrāt
Ra's Abū Dā'ūd
Qurayyāt
Wādī Dayqah
Wādī 'Idayy
Bidbid
Wādī Al Khawd
Wādī Al Ma'āwil
Nakhal
Al Ḥawqayn
Wādī Banī Hinayy
Ar Rustāq
Al 'Awābī
Samā'il
Al Jabal
Al Akhḏar
Wādī Samā'il
Al Ḥamrā'
Bahlā'
Nizwá
Izkī
Manaḥ
Hamrā' Ad Durū'
Jabal Sufrat Ad Dawḥ
Sināw
Adam
Jabal Salakh
Wādī Adam
Wādī 'Indām
Wādī Tarbān
Wādī Ḥalfayn
Wādī Al Lithī
Jabal Majāyiz
Wādī Mayhūl
Wādī Musallim
Wādī Al 'Umayrī
Wādī Jibāl
Wādī Aswad
Wādī Az Zibrah
Wādī Rafāsh
Wādī Al Ayn
Wādī Al Ḥanyah
'Irq Al Ḥā yirah
'Irq As Salīl
Um Az Zumūl
Ramlat Khaylah
Sabkhat Um As Samīm
Ramlat Ar Rawl
Ramlat Abū Aṯ Ṯubūl
Al Ghāfah
Ra's Ash Shajar
Damā' Wa Aṯ Ṯā'iyyīn
Ibrā'
Samad Ash Sha'n
Wādī Banī Khālid
Al Qābil
Al Muḏaybī
Bidiyyah
Wādī Tīwī
Ṯīwī
Sūr
Al Ḥad
Wādī Buwād
Wādī Musāwī
Wādī Ḥāṣid
Al Kāmil Wa Al Wāfī
Ja'lān Banī Bū Ḥasan
Ja'lān Banī Bū'Alī
Al Ashkharah
Ra's Jibsh
AL HAJAR
AL GHARBĪ
AL HAJAR ASH SHARQĪ
RAMLAT ĀL WAHĪBAH
RIMĀL ASH SHARQIYYAH
Ḥafīt
Jabal Ḥafīt
Jabal Aswad
Al Jabal Al Abyad
Dank
Yanqul
As Sunaynah
Wādī Dank
Wādī Al Jifrah
'Ibrī
Wādī Al Ḥawasnah
Wādī Banī 'Umar

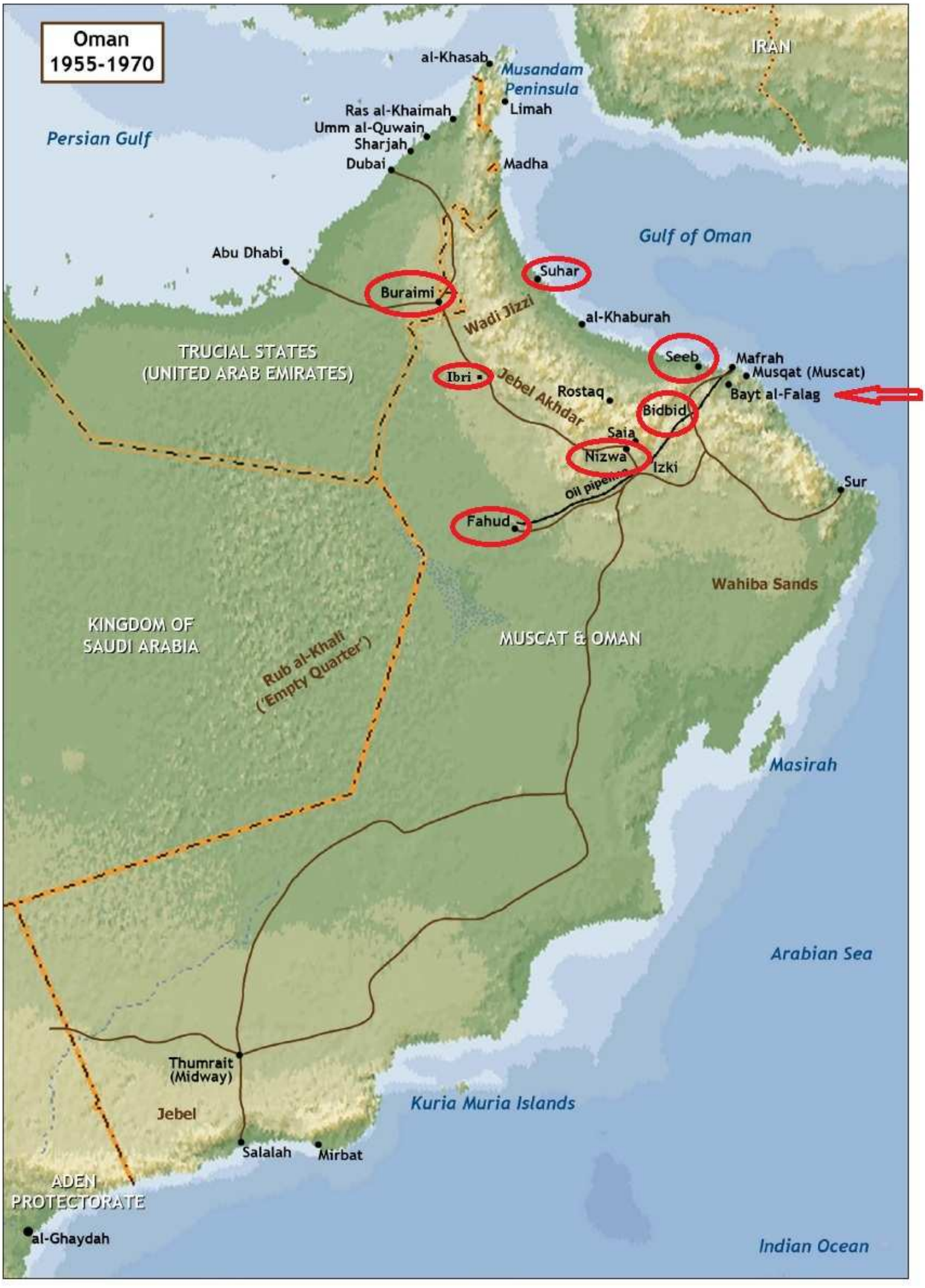
Map of the Sultanate of Oman from page xvii of "Oman: Politics and Development" by Ian Skeet, Macmillan, 1997 showing particularly the road, or in fact a desert track when I traversed it in 1969 from Salala to Nizwa.



The Sultanate of Oman



Location map of study area of Wadi Al-Jizi


Oman
1955-1970
IRAN
al-Khasab
Musandam
Peninsula
Limah
Ras al-Khaimah
Umm al-Quwain
Sharjah
Dubai
Madha
Persian Gulf
Gulf of Oman
Abu Dhabi
Suhar
Buraimi
Wadi Jizzi
al-Khaburah
TRUCIAL STATES
(UNITED ARAB EMIRATES)
Seeb
Mafrah
Musqat (Muscat)
Ibri
Jebel Akhdar
Rostaq
Bayt al-Falag
Bidbid
Saiq
Nizwa
Izki
Oil pipeline
Sur
Fahud
Wahiba Sands
KINGDOM OF
SAUDI ARABIA
MUSCAT & OMAN
Rub al-Khali
('Empty Quarter')
Masirah
Arabian Sea
Thumrait
(Midway)
Jebel
Kuria Muria Islands
Salalah
Mirbat
ADEN
PROTECTORATE
al-Ghaydah
Indian Ocean

From page 11 of Monsoon Revolution; Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman 1965–1976, Abdel Razzaq Takriti, published 2013.

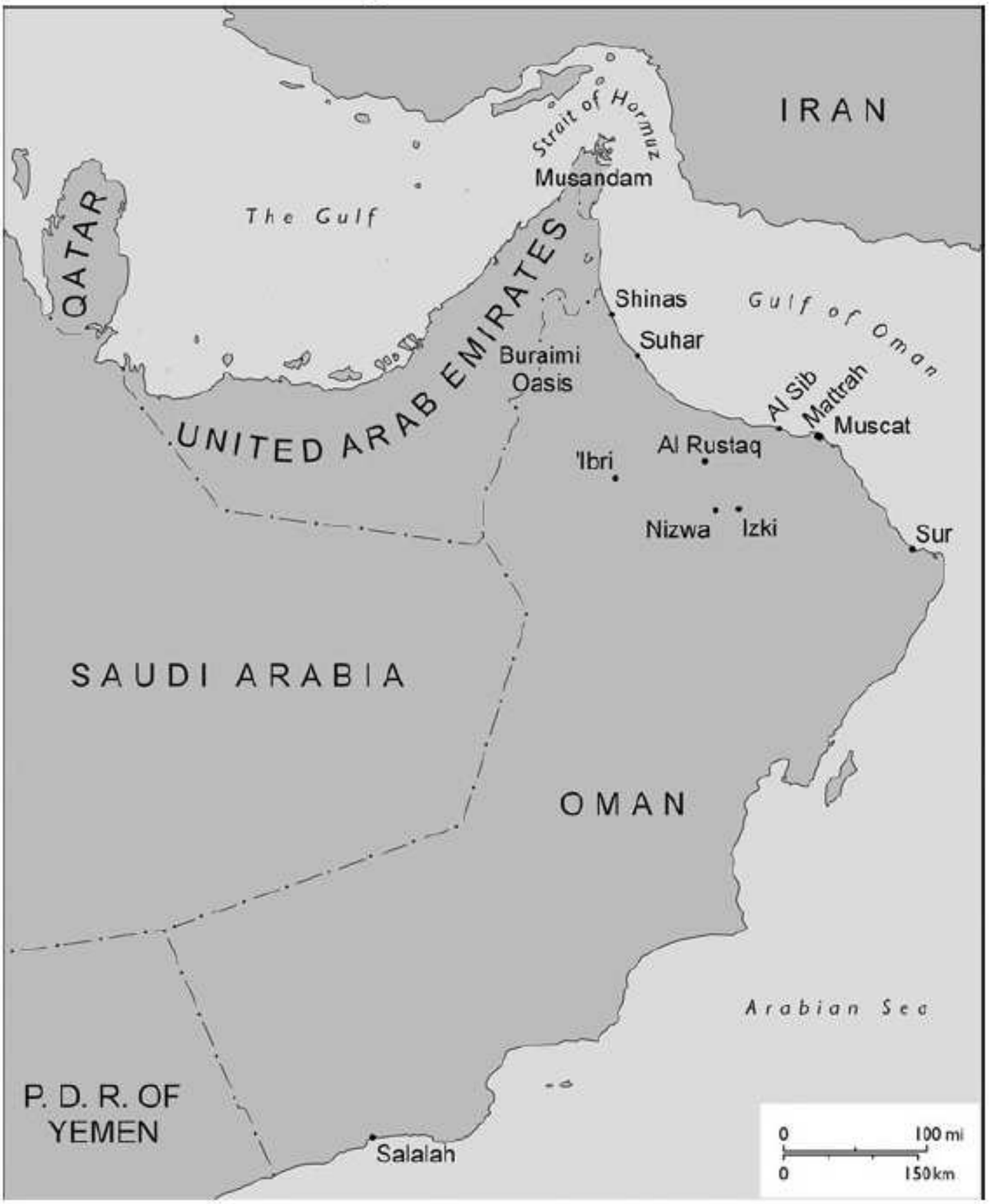
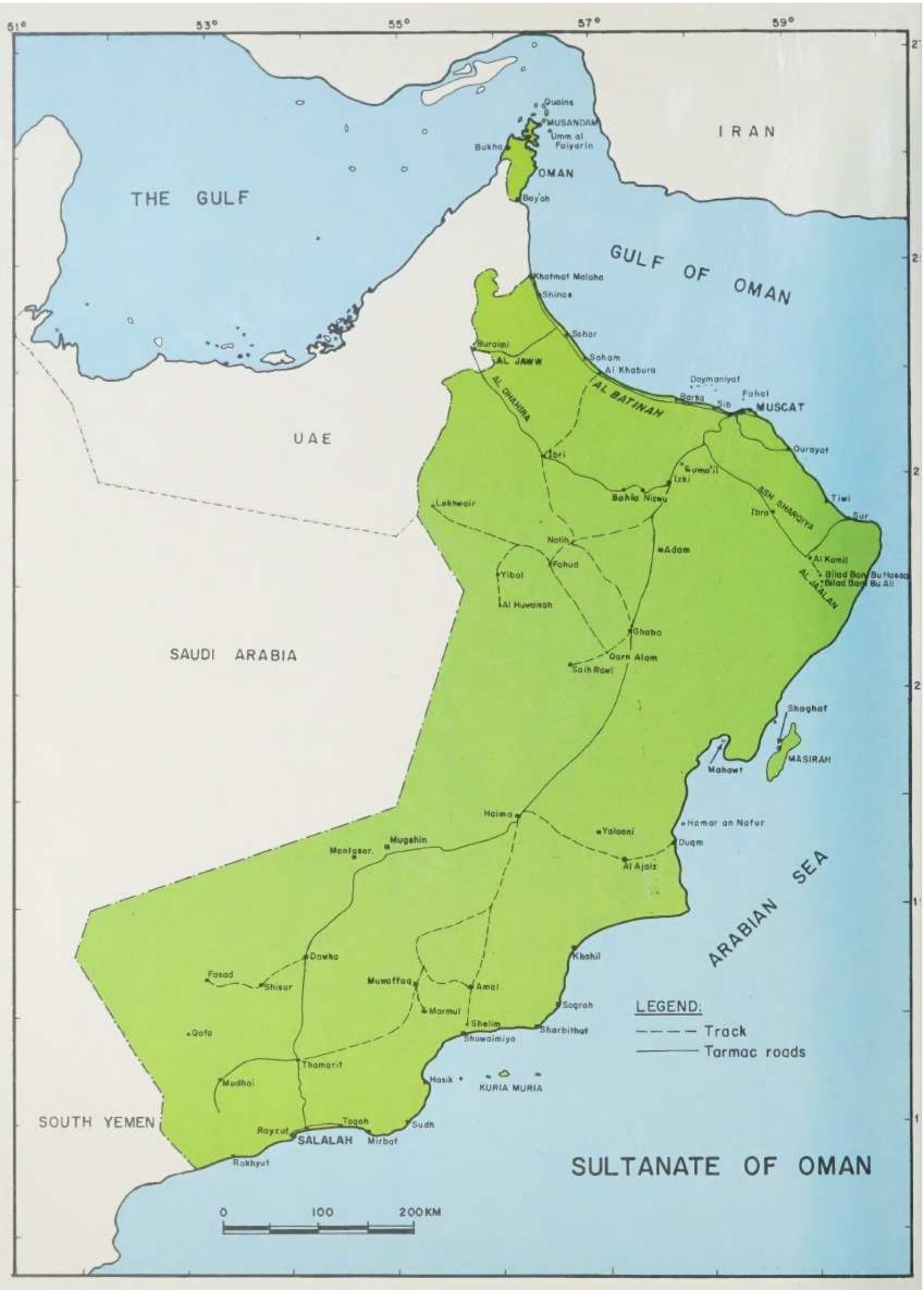
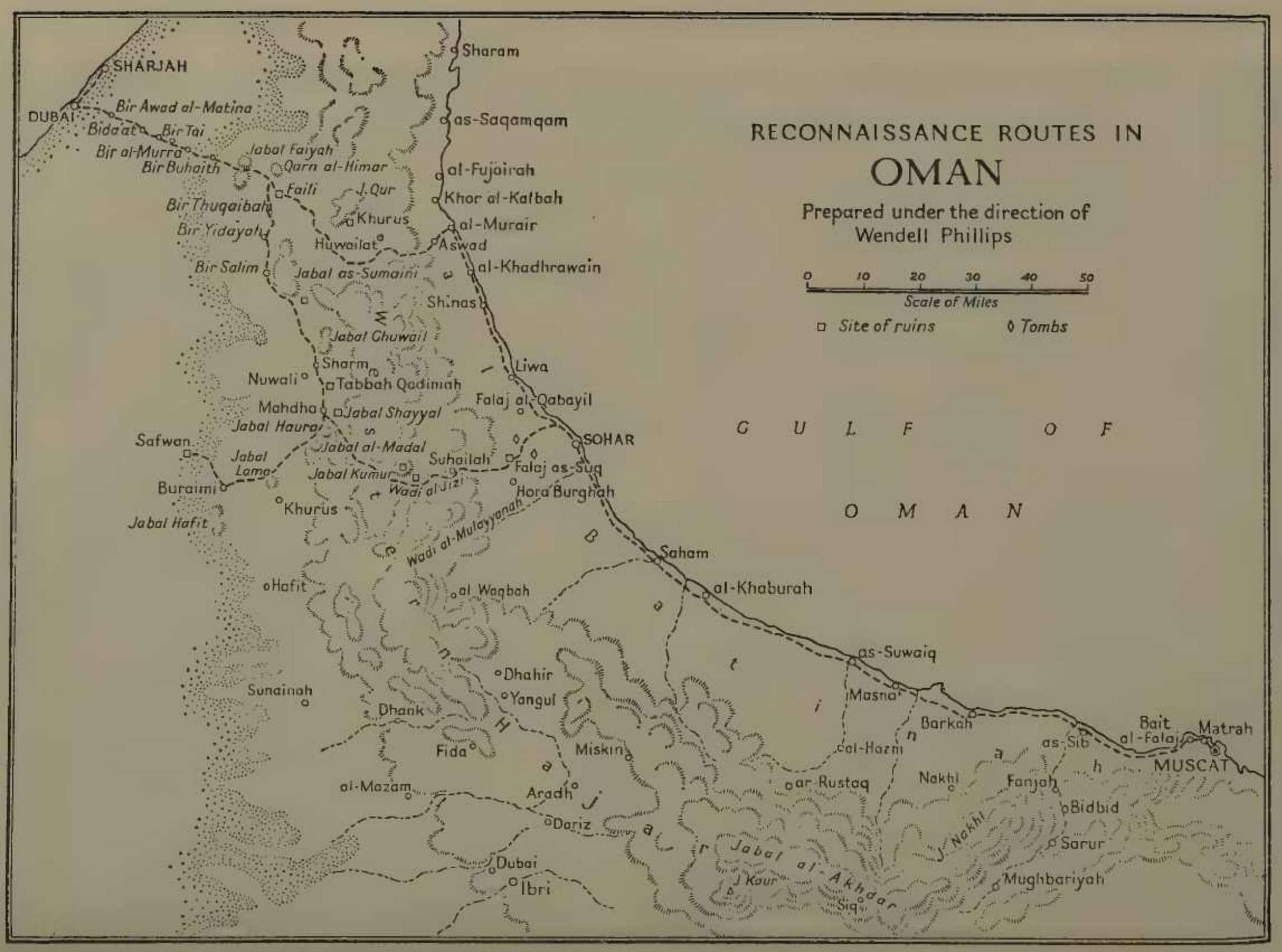


Fig. 1. Map of Oman

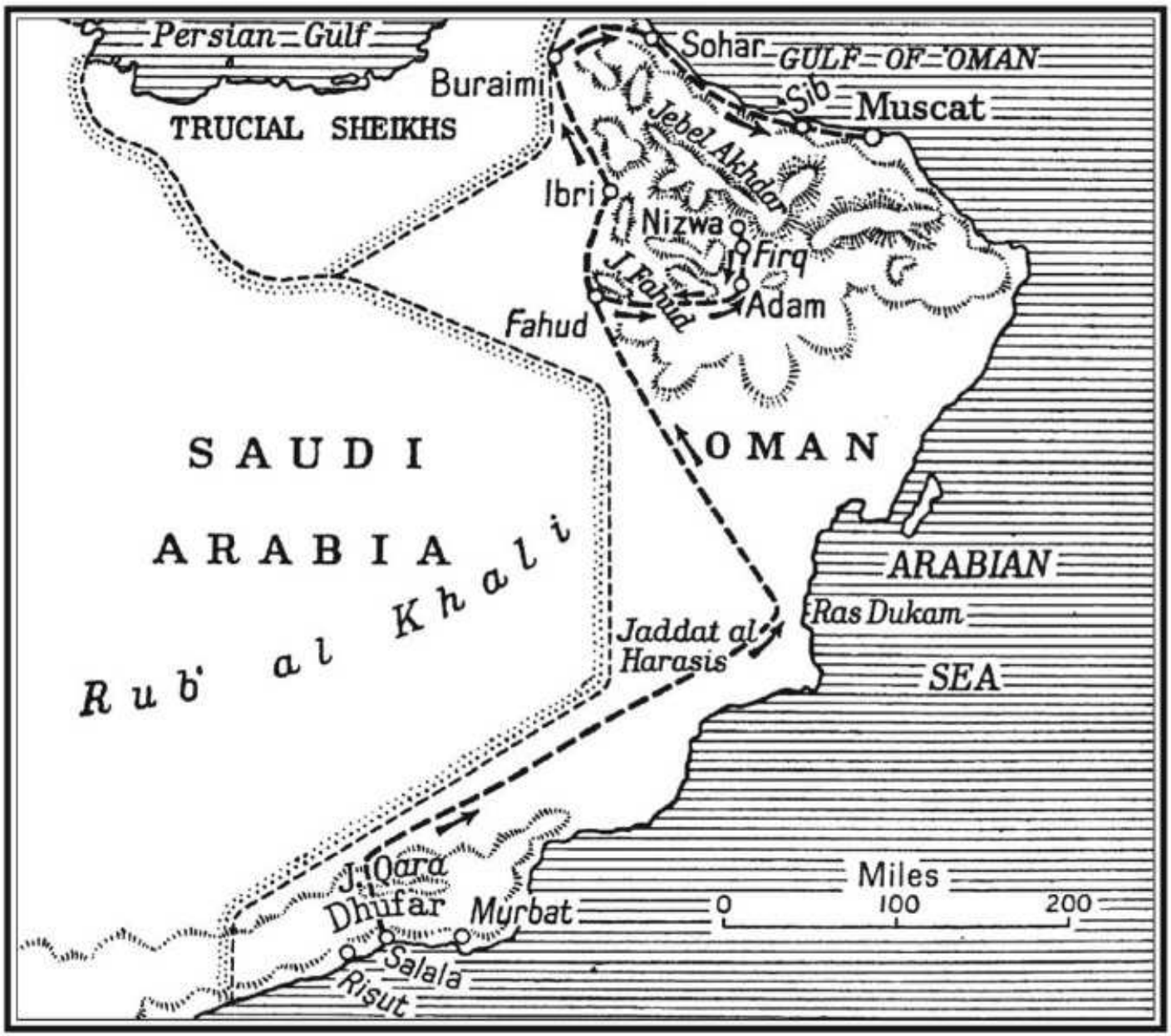
From page 314 of "Birds of Oman", Michael Gallagher, 1980.





MAP 3. Reconnaissance Routes in Oman.

From page 11 of "Sultan in Oman" by Jan Morris, Faber and Faber, 1957; the Sultan's route exactly matching our own from Niswa to Fahud to Ibri to Buraimi to Sohar via the fabulous Wadi Jizzi to Sib and thus to Muscat, or actually in our case returning to the Sultan's Armed Forces Training Centre at Ghallah which was our starting point.



Muscat and Oman in 1955, showing the Sultan's route